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ABSTRACT

Noting that research in New Zealand and internationally indicates the importance of the early years for children's well-being, learning, and social participation in the present and for the future, this long-term strategic plan offers a comprehensive and cohesive policy framework, goals, and strategies for early childhood education in New Zealand over the next 10 years. The plan was developed by a working group that held scores of consultation meetings during 2000-2001 with various constituencies in New Zealand. The New Zealand government identified two broad aims for the strategic plan: to improve the quality of early childhood (EC) services, and to increase participation in quality EC services. The plan incorporates 20 strategies divided into four strategic directions to support these aims: (1) increased participation, engagement, and access; (2) collaborative relationships to support quality; (3) improved quality; and (4) sustainability of services. For each strategic direction, the plan identifies key issues and directions, as well as indicators of successful implementation of the strategies. The strategies represent three major shifts in policy direction: (1) enhancing policies at the national level and contexts at the local level to facilitate the implementation of Te Whariki (the national curriculum) in its fullest sense; (2) changing structures, systems, and regulations so they become better coordinated to support contributions by parents, teachers, and educators to children's early learning and development; and (3) transforming the role of government within the early childhood education sector so that early childhood education is provided in partnership with government. Long-term measures beyond the life of this plan are outlined in the plan's Appendix. (KB)

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A. Introduction

Children are born ready to learn. During the first few years, experiences develop children's brains in important ways for ongoing learning throughout their lives. The foundations for language are established and significant attitudes and dispositions towards the world are developed. In the early years, children are both vulnerable to stress and amazingly receptive to positive learning opportunities.

Research in New Zealand and internationally indicates the importance of the early years for children's wellbeing, learning and social participation in the present and for the future. Studies that follow children's progress over several years show positive associations between early childhood education (ECE) and achievement in literacy and numeracy in later schooling. The most recent Competent Children report found that five years after children move to school, ECE continues to play a part in their performance in essential skills, such as problem solving and communication, as well as in core competencies, such as mathematics and reading comprehension. [1]

But this research evidence is qualified by a key factor: ECE must be of high quality if participation is to have these positive effects. High quality comes from features of Early Childhood services, and is realised for children through their interactions with early childhood teachers/educators.

The New Zealand curriculum for ECE, *Te Whäriki,* is internationally acclaimed. It emphasises cognitive, cultural and social development. *Te Whäriki* encourages children to explore ideas in a safe and consistent environment, to become confident and competent communicators, and to collaborate to solve problems that are meaningful and interesting. However, current policies shape the characteristics of many of our services in ways that prevent our curriculum from being fully implemented. Our programmes are not yet internationally acclaimed. It is time to strengthen and energise our teachers and educators.

Given how critical early learning is, New Zealand is fortunate to have high levels of participation in early childhood services, compared with many other countries - 60 percent of all children aged from birth to 5 years. But participation is not at the same level for all groups in our society. The proportions of children from Mäori, Pacific and low-income families who participate are significantly lower than the national averages. We need to address barriers so that all children are able to participate.

Why develop a strategic plan for early childhood education?

The long term strategic plan offers a comprehensive and cohesive policy framework, goals and strategies for early childhood education. It starts from the interests of infants, toddlers and young children and the conditions needed to support their learning environments. The plan is based on national values for children in Aotearoa/New Zealand and aims to build the best early childhood services in the world. It comes at a crucial time for ECE, after a decade of short term planning and ad hoc changes to policies and rules. The plan will point a new direction that puts the sector on a sound footing for the next ten years and beyond.

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[1] Wylie, C. et al (in press). *Competent Children at 10.* Wellington: NZCER.

Government identified two broad aims for the strategic plan: to improve the quality of early childhood (EC) services in New Zealand, and to increase participation in quality EC services. While the plan is divided into four strategic directions to support these aims, each direction contributes to the other and to the whole. In order to realise the full benefits of the policy measures, the plan should be implemented as an interconnected package. Moreover, to effectively support families with young children, ECE policy needs to be nested in other social and employment policies, such as policies for good housing, paid parental leave, domestic leave and inflation adjustments for Family Support.

Strategies and directions

Twenty strategies are presented in the strategic plan for early childhood education policy. They set out four main directions:

- increased participation, engagement and access;
- collaborative relationships (to support quality);
- improved quality; and
- sustainability of services.

Taken together, the strategies represent three major shifts in policy direction.

First, enhancing policies at the national level and contexts at the local level to facilitate the implementation of *Te Whäriki* in its fullest sense.

Second, changing structures, systems and regulations so they become better co-ordinated to support the contributions made by parents, teachers and educators to children's early learning and development. The strategic plan recognises parents as the first and most important contributors to their children's early childhood education. Parent- and whänau-provided services are to be afforded appropriate additional support in their role as educators of children and whänau and families. Parenting programmes would be linked to other types of EC services. Teachers and educators who are responsible for children in the absence of whänau and parents would be supported to meet higher professional standards.

Third, transforming the role of Government within the early childhood education sector so that early childhood education is provided in partnership with Government. Government would take a more active and responsive role in planning, advising and funding EC services, setting high standards and enhancing resources and review functions. In the long term, ECE would be positioned to become part of the wider education sector - alongside schools - where young children are accorded a universal entitlement to free (or almost free) education. This would acknowledge the value of ECE for young children and for society, and the Government's role in ensuring equal educational opportunities. In making access to free ECE an entitlement, New Zealand would join leading OECD countries and place a high political priority on children's educational interests.

The strategies have their basis in strengths, rather than in a deficit. The principle of whakamana/empowerment is the core principle for our vision for the future. The focus is on learning; learning in the context of *Te Whäriki*.

This principle is extended into a whakatauki, the touchstone created for this strategic plan:

Te whakamanatanga o *Te Whäriki* .

Contributors

Members of the working group that developed the draft strategic plan for ECE held scores of consultation meetings during the summer of 2000-2001, including several with Mäori, in rural and urban areas, and several fono with Pacific peoples. After the draft of the strategic plan was completed by a technical planning group, another consultation round took place in August-September 2001, with 30 face-to-face meetings led by Dr Anne Meade, and others by members of the Pacific or Mäori caucus as appropriate.

In late September 2001, approximately over 900 submissions commenting on the draft strategic plan, mostly in positive terms, came from individuals, early childhood organisations and other organisations with an interest in children and childhood. The most commonly expressed concern related to funding - "Where will the money come from?" - as people recognised that lifting quality and increasing participation in EC services involves considerable costs, yet families and services are stretched.

In finalising the strategic plan, the group did not reach consensus in a few areas, but this report does not incorporate the different views of members of the group. It needs to be recognised also that the group was required to work within financial boundaries laid down by Government. Long term measures beyond the life of this ten year plan are outlined in Appendix A. These measures form an integral part of the vision. Their adoption would complete the vision's implementation.

Values

The working group that developed the consultation document for the strategic plan adopted the following values:

- to honour *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*;
- to observe the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCROC);[2]
- to facilitate *fair, inclusive, and equitable ECE*;
- to promote *high quality ECE*;

[2] UNCROC Articles of importance for this plan are: Article 2 (no discrimination), Article 3 (best interests of the child are paramount), Article 6 (survival and development), Article 12 (voice and respect), Article 23 (access and integration for children with disabilities), Article 28 (access to education), Article 29 (cultural identity), Article 30 (indigenous rights to language and culture), and Article 31 (play and recreation).

- to accept ECE as *equal in status* with other education sectors;
- to *respect diversity* of services, philosophies and pedagogies;
- to address the *interests of the child, whänau/family, and society*;
- to benefit the *whole child;* and
- to foster c*ollaboration* between children, adults, and organisations.

Mäori authority

In recent years, many hui and discussions have explored ways in which Mäori could have greater authority over the education of their children. Iwi authorities and runanga have been entering into agreements with the Ministry of Education where iwi exercise greater authority for educational matters.

During the time period of developing this strategic plan, two significant processes began which have the potential to increase Mäori authority in early childhood education. First, Ngati Tuwharetoa Paramount Chief Tumu Te Heuheu hosted the Hui Taumata Matauranga (national Mäori education meeting) in February this year. It was attended by over 400 Mäori representatives of iwi, education sector groups, and education interest groups, including various early childhood representatives. Ministers addressed the Hui and spent most of their time listening to the discussion. The Hui made 107 recommendations about issues and priorities in Mäori education.

ECE issues generally, including those of authority in ECE, were raised in workshops. There were also more general discussions about authority across the different facets of the education sector. There was strong agreement on the importance of ECE, the need for support from parents, and the need for whänau to be involved and "have a say" in their children's education. The Minister of Education undertook to respond to these recommendations about how the Government could facilitate these aspirations. He and other Ministers will do so at the next Hui Taumata Matauranga in November 2001.

The significance of the Hui Taumatu Matauranga process is that Ministers are looking to build a genuine relationship with Mäori in the education area, which will lead to high-level input from Mäori into education policy – including ECE policy. Issues of Mäori authority raised during consultation on the strategic plan will be progressed in this Government forum and reflected in ongoing policy work arising from the plan.

Secondly, a review of the relationship between the Crown and Te Köhanga Reo National Trust was completed. One of its key recommendations is that the Ministry of Education and Te Puni Kokiri work together with iwi, köhanga whänau and Te Köhanga Reo Trust to develop a process by which devolution of köhanga reo from the Trust to iwi will occur within the next five years. This process will build on and link into existing relationships and processes that Government has with iwi. Iwi involvement in köhanga reo ensures the cultural integrity and kaupapa of the movement.

Key issues and directions

1. Participation, engagement and access

Participation: Equitable access to EC services in Aotearoa/New Zealand is still not a reality. Participation is currently lower among Mäori and Pacific children and in some regions. It is also lower among families with lower incomes and in areas where incomes are below average.

Access: Some districts do not have a diversity of EC services. Some whänau and families face barriers to access, such as cost. Some do not have access to the type of service they want or need, in particular full day services, even though growth in this type of service has been substantial.[3] EC services do not consistently meet the needs and aspirations of Mäori and Pacific whänau and parents, or families of children with special educational needs. Rural families often have little choice and face barriers of distance and cost.

In recent years employment patterns have changed and become more fluid. The increasing participation of women in the workforce is one of the most significant social trends. Associated with increased labour market participation has been a trend for many women to delay childbearing. Lack of access to appropriate EC services can be a barrier to parents or whänau taking up work and educational opportunities. Almost one in six (15%) of parents in the New Zealand Childcare Survey stated that problems accessing ECE and care had affected their ability to participate in employment.[4] This effect is greater for mothers than for fathers.

Social, economic and demographic factors (such as changes in working patterns) have led to a significant increase in demand for EC services, especially full day services. Some types of services (particularly kindergartens) are effectively restricted from adapting their services to meet the needs of working parents because of the Ministry of Education's funding rules.

Raising young families today is more challenging, yet often less well supported.

Support: Some EC services fail to deliver quality education and care. Others cannot remain viable because of management, administrative, staffing and financial difficulties. Providing support and professional development is challenging for rural services, given their small budgets, and is not currently funded for licence-exempt groups. There is no consistent infrastructure for supporting services, and they are not obliged to accept support when problems are identified.

Government funds some support services on a contestable contractual basis. However, contestability, measurable outputs in contracts and variable delivery performance have meant support is patchy across time and between providers. Access has been affected as a consequence.

Planning: The provision of EC services has been left to "the market". As a consequence, provision can be patchy. Some areas have too many services, as populations decline or move to other locations, and other areas have too few. In some areas oversupply has been caused by new services setting up and targeting the same population base as existing services. Uneven provision of EC services impacts on access to ECE for families and whänau and sustainability of EC services.

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[3] Department of Labour & NACEW (1999), *Children, Families and Work – The New Zealand Childcare Survey 1998*. Wellington: Department of Labour & NACEW.

4 Ibid.

We would be successful when:

- Parents and whänau are well supported in their role.
- Families and whänau are aware of the benefits of quality ECE.
- Families and whänau are aware of the choices of EC services.
- Families and communities have equity of access to a diverse range of quality EC services that meet their needs.
- Participation rates are high and relatively even across all population groups.
- Matauranga Mäori-based ECE enables Mäori to live as Mäori and is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Mäori as tangata whenua.
- EC services attend to the needs of all children and their families and whänau to learn and understand Mäori culture and te reo Mäori.
- EC services provide culturally sensitive programmes and systems.
- EC provide delivery systems that parents and whänau to participate in community organisations, the labour market or training.
- Parents are willing and able to undertake educational, governance and management roles.
- There are easy-to-access, coherent and co-ordinated support services, both for practitioners and for those in governance and management roles.

2. Collaborative relationships

Links between EC services and the compulsory education sector are largely informal and responsibilities are seldom shared. Communities of learning across this boundary are relatively rare. There are a large number of Government agencies, officials and contractors involved in licensing, funding, monitoring, evaluating and supporting EC services. These can give inconsistent or even conflicting advice. Links between EC services and Government health and social development agencies and programmes are weak. Agencies do not know gaps and overlaps in services provided or funded by Government.

We would be successful when:

- There is co-ordinated knowledge and action between EC services and schools, parent support and development programmes, health and welfare agencies, so that they meet diverse needs effectively.
- Communities of learning, revolving around learning that furthers the interests of children and their whänau and families, are created and/or strengthened for parents and staff.
- Government agencies streamline requirements and provide co-ordinated and consistent advice and support for EC services.

3. Quality early childhood services

The key issue is ensuring that all children attending EC services receive good quality ECE, exemplified by effective delivery of the curriculum.[5] The essential aspects of high quality ECE include:

- collaborative relationships in services among children, adults and peers;
- guided participation of children while allowing observation of others;
- time for children to explore and reflect;
- structural features of quality services;[6]
- child access to suitably qualified teachers with good pay and conditions and stability of staffing;
- whānau and parent participation in learning processes;
- sufficient curriculum guidance and resources;
- strong leadership in governance and management; and
- research and evaluation information.

Currently, inadequate resources, including a serious teacher shortage and inadequate regulations, compromise many of these aspects of ECE quality. Implementation of the curriculum to support the growth and development of children and their families appears patchy at best.[7] Services can be approved even though they will be hard-pressed to facilitate appropriate learning experiences for young children and their whānau and families. Teacher education and professional development are fragmented and of variable quality, and there is not enough provision focused on cultural sensitivity.

We would be successful when:

- Through participation in quality ECE, children grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.
- Management and educators/teachers, in partnership with parents and whānau, promote and extend the learning and development of all children.

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[5] We have defined *quality* as the essential aspects of early childhood environments valued in our society which support well-being, learning, development and rights of children, and support families and whānau in raising their children.

[6] These influence the types of processes that take place. Research (e.g., Phillipsen et al (1997), The prediction of process quality from structural features of child care, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12, pp.281-303) highlights staff qualifications, education and experience; adult to child ratios; group size; staff wages and working conditions; staff stability; and parent involvement.

[7] For example, 33% of centres or umbrella bodies visited by ERO in 2000 required further action in regard to Desirable Objective and Practice 3. See Education Review Office (2001), *Early Childhood Services*, Wellington: ERO, May, p.21.

- No children are harmed by participating in ECE.

- Salaried staff who are responsible for implementing the curriculum are registered teachers, valued and fairly recompensed, and adequately supported.

4. Sustainable early childhood services

Funding: Increases in Government funding in the 1990s have not matched rising costs, and inadequate funding has affected both service viability and affordability for families. Burdensome fees or community fundraising are needed to sustain quality services and support for parents and whānau. Funding rules for chartered services are complex and costly for EC services to deal with. The difficulties many rural services face in sustaining EC services in their communities are compounded by some funding rules.

The *funding system* seems inequitable. Some funding criteria are different for different types of services. Take-up varies and can be inversely related to quality. Small services are disadvantaged. There are concerns that the funding system creates perverse incentives against quality, e.g., services having the largest permissible size.

Although the priority for the *discretionary grants scheme* is to increase participation in EC services, there are concerns that it can allocate grants to new services in areas where there is declining community need; it may not be sufficient to meet community needs in other areas; and it does not address the quality goal.

There are ongoing problems with the *childcare subsidy* in practice, in particular a heavy administrative load imposed on EC services by complex methods of reporting and recording information and too many payment errors, as well as difficulties in forecasting funding.

We would be successful when:

- The funding system is responsive to the diverse needs of EC services, is transparent and equitable, and does not privilege any group.

- Funding levels, models and arrangements, in association with planning, facilitate the achievement of the overall strategic plan and Government objectives.

B. The Strategies

DIRECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION, ENGAGEMENT AND ACCESS

Participation[8] in quality ECE is beneficial to the wellbeing, development, and learning of children. It also builds strong foundations for a successful educational, social and economic future. Quality ECE gives parents and whānau opportunities to strengthen their parenting role, take part in unpaid and paid work, and undertake training opportunities. These strategies would involve working with local communities to address barriers to participation, and ensure that communities have access to quality EC services that meet their needs.

1.1 Promote participation and adult engagement in EC services

Build participation in ECE by actively promoting it with those groups that are currently not participating. Increase knowledge and understanding of the educational benefits of participation for all children, both through existing initiatives, adapted according to community need, and through new initiatives. These would include:

- gathering more information on why groups are not participating;
- running a multi-agency campaign to promote the benefits of ECE;
- giving information about local EC services;
- promoting the value of parents and whānau engaging in their children's early education, thus increasing the intensity of participation;[9]
- integrating parenting programmes and EC services; and
- building new community and reciprocal relationships with iwi to promote participation.

New programmes would be developed and existing programmes would be expanded to support parent and whānau engagement with ECE. Information from research and the Promoting ECE Participation project can help to suggest solutions to barriers in local communities. Local communities working with the Ministry of Education and EC services are best placed to know what these barriers are and what will work. There would be an ongoing need to assess whether the right approach is being used. EC services would be supported to reach out into the neighbourhood and meet up with parents and whānau. (See the Collaborative Relationships strategies.)

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[8] *Quality participation* is defined as participation in quality early childhood services from when the parents/whānau feel the time is right until the child starts school (any time between 5 and 6 years of age). Participation can be measured by enrolment, length of participation and 'quantum' of hours per week. This last measure relates to intensity of participation (Frede, 1998). As well as hours of attendance per week, intensity of participation is about adults and children exploring knowledge and understanding together, inclusion of parenting programmes into early education services, and links to health services and other participation features.

[9] See Note 8, above.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

This strategy allows iwi and Mäori communities to identify the barriers and determine the solutions that would work for them. This strategy would ensure sufficient funding to implement solutions to barriers and guarantee tino rangatiratanga.

✕ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Pacific families, community and church groups are the most knowledgeable about their own needs, and can create the diverse local solutions required to increase participation in ECE. In some areas ethnic specific strategies may need to be adopted.

Community consultation points to the need for more information on EC services, differences between licensed and licence-exempt groups, and processes involved in setting up a new centre. A small proportion of Pacific families are unlikely to join EC services. They need information on home-based and family-based programmes.

1.2 Improve access to quality EC services[10]

Improve access through increasing the provision of appropriate EC services that meet the needs of whänau and families, in both rural and urban communities.

Approaches would include:

- provision of Crown-owned facilities, with systems to protect EC services;
- revision of the discretionary grants scheme;
- consideration of removing the cap for enrolments in the Correspondence School Early Childhood Service;
- mobile EC services;
- revising regulations and funding rules to enable EC services to be responsive to the needs of working parents;
- making classrooms in schools available for licence-exempt groups and parenting programmes;
- advice and support to new centres in their first year or two; and
- provision of transport (particularly important for children with special educational needs, and Pacific children).

There would also be work with EC services to increase their responsiveness to diverse community needs and to the needs of working parents. EC services also need to be inclusive of Mäori and Pacific children, parents and whänau and other ethnic groups within communities.

[10] This strategy applies to both licence-exempt and licensed and chartered services.

When the Ministry of Education assumes responsibility for specialist education services, it needs to ensure that ECE is included in special education policy. Consideration would be given to early intervention, resourcing and coherent special education provision for children from birth to 8 years of age, in order to ensure better outcomes for children.

The Ministry of Education would develop policy relating to the use of Crown-owned land and property for ECE purposes. There could be a range of options, such as services leasing facilities from the Crown. The principles guiding policy would include: meeting community need, facilitating viability, sustainability and quality, and ensuring security of tenure.

The Pacific pool of discretionary grants for capital costs is generally effective, but some other aspects of the discretionary grants scheme need revising. The scheme would facilitate an increase of appropriate EC services, through gathering information on community needs to guide allocation according to need; expanding the funding criteria, so that "start up" costs (such as large equipment, storage sheds, etc) are funded to minimise financial struggles in the first year; introducing processes to identify where barriers to access exist in service networks; and requiring business plans, to spell out how the service would be sustainable, as part of discretionary grants application processes.

The Ministry of Education would ensure that high-needs community-based groups are adequately supported, as they make transitions from playgroups to probationary licence to full licence and charter.

The Ministry of Education would develop policy to improve access for rural families to quality EC services. It would need to examine existing programmes and services, and re-align policies, funding and rules to the aim of participation in quality services.

There would also be work with EC services to increase their responsiveness to diverse community and family needs. As populations and family circumstances change, advice and support would be given to help services diversify, and professional development would be available to assist leaders in the services to bring about changes in practice.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Access to appropriate EC services is a barrier faced by a number of Mäori whänau. This strategy could consider new initiatives to remove barriers to access and support for existing EC services to be more responsive to Mäori tikanga.

✖ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

This strategy would address access barriers through supplying appropriate services to Pacific communities, and supporting existing EC services to be more responsive to Pacific families.

1.3 Plan the provision of EC services

Work with communities to ensure that the provision of ECE and facilities meets changing community needs. The Ministry of Education would play an increased role in identifying gaps in the provision of EC services and the control of the establishment and closure of EC services. The role would be facilitative of community-based provision or transformation.

More even provision of EC services would improve access, sustainability and participation. It would ensure that there is a network of services in place that:

- meets community needs, with minimal gaps or duplication; and
- is responsive to change, for example, in population.

Effective planning must be based on the principle of collaborative relationships between the Ministry of Education and local communities. It would ensure there is a network of services in place that delivers services to children and meets the labour market needs of the community in population. A focus of the planning would be to support the development of multi-purpose buildings.

At the national level, appropriate systems and funding for planning at the local level would be established. The Ministry of Education would then work collaboratively with key decision-makers in local communities, iwi and the ECE sector to establish and implement mechanisms for planning. The Ministry could build on its existing planning capability in the schools sector. The voluntary nature of ECE would require a more complex community needs assessment process. The steps for the ECE sector could include: community needs analysis, community consultation to feed into planning decisions, and advice and support for new groups or services needing to diversify.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Planning could improve Mäori participation in quality ECE if the community needs assessment process takes into account the responsiveness of EC services to Mäori. This could be achieved through reciprocal relationships with iwi and Mäori organisations.

✖ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Planning could improve participation of Pacific children in quality ECE if the community needs assessment process takes into account the responsiveness of EC services to Pacific peoples.

1.4 Provide advice and support services to EC services

Review and improve the current systems of advice and support. Draw on and build up the resources, skills and knowledge of EC services and their surrounding communities, through a coherent, systematic approach to advice and support. This approach would be particularly valuable for new and struggling services.

A central Government agency with a strong commitment to ECE would be responsible for a coherent, co-ordinated system that identifies gaps in provision, supports new services, strengthens struggling EC services and ensures consistent interpretation of the regulations and rules. It would draw on and build up the resources, skills and knowledge of EC services and their surrounding communities, be responsive to local need and have the capability and resources to meet those needs.

Many EC services are well supported through umbrella organisations providing a range of advice and support services. Others are supported through membership of professional organisations offering valid and valued support. These would not be replaced by centrally provided support.

A review of advice and support would be carried out to identify gaps in provision and needs. Submitters during consultation describe gaps in relation to children with special educational

needs, and to information and communication technology (ICT) policy and support. A central Government agency would take responsibility for having in place a co-ordinated and coherent infrastructure, which includes a range of functions.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Mäori EC services, especially those outside umbrella organisations, may be vulnerable due to the current fragmented and insufficient advice and support structures. The possibility of iwi, runanga and other Mäori organisations providing advice and support to EC services would be explored as devolution of authority to Mäori occurs (see the Introduction.)

✖ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Responsiveness to the needs of Pacific EC services would be achieved through having suitably qualified Pacific peoples providing advice and support services in Pacific languages, e.g., for licence-exempt groups wanting to become licensed and chartered.

DIRECTION TWO: COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Sustainable EC services that provide opportunities for children, parents and whänau to participate in quality ECE would be communities of learning and/or based on collaborative relationships. These strategies would support the four principles of Te Whäriki.

2.1 Create collaborative relationships and improve programme and agency co-ordination between EC services and other relevant services

Strategic relationships at a local, district and national level among agencies with responsibilities for services and programmes for young children, parents and whänau. There would be communities of learning focused on childhood learning and development. Linkages would be improved between EC services, parenting programmes, schools, services and hospitals, local Government, ESOL providers and social services to meet children's developmental needs holistically.

Services working together can concentrate energies towards empowering children and parents to promote and extend the learning and development of each child.

At the local level, EC services would be assisted to engage in inter-service and inter-agency collaboration. For example, agencies could collaborate to identify children who are not participating and introduce them to services or help set up a playgroup; parenting programmes and EC services could jointly develop resources to enhance transitions from home to ECE.

Some EC services could be supported to become communities of learning through:

- strengthening links with iwi;
- recognition of the need for adult space for adult interaction within ECE centres;
- integrating services for children with special educational needs;
- use of exemplars of involvement by parents and whänau in assessment and curriculum; and
- opportunities for parent support through parenting programmes attached to EC services, including licence-exempt playgroups and home-based schemes.

These EC services would reach out into the surrounding neighbourhood (including schools) to link those with an interest in children and their parents and whänau. They would have productive relationships with other services in their area, e.g., sharing a building with a health service or working with public health nurses and those providing parenting programmes. This would be supported by planning processes.

At the national level, the Ministry of Education would work with the Ministries of Health and Social Development to co-ordinate efforts to improve linkages between EC services and other social services. The first stage would be to establish clear policy and operational frameworks that would support linkages between services.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Mäori regard this strategy as very important. EC services would improve their responsiveness to Mäori communities through engagement in a community of learning, which would include collaborative relationships with local iwi and Mäori authorities.

⌘ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Collaborative relationships between EC services and other social agencies would help considerably to improve participation of Pacific children and families in EC services, as well as access to other services. Including Pacific community organisations and church groups would strengthen communities of learning.

2.2 Improve the coherence and continuity of education for children from birth to 8 years of age

Achieve coherence and continuity in children's learning, development and education from birth to 8 years of age through improving transitions between home, EC services, and school, and between parenting programmes and EC services. Coherence and continuity would also be done through better links between curricula for EC services and schools. The continuity of support for children with special educational needs would be improved.

An early years document would be developed to clarify the links between *Te Whäriki* and the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. This would make explicit the underlying principles for effective teaching practice in the early years. This would need to be supported through initial teacher education, professional development, and improved resources and support to teachers.

Building the right mix of initiatives would require further policy work in consultation with the EC sector and schools. Initiatives would include:

- extending *Te Whäriki* into the first years at school;
- changing regulations and rules that currently limit coherence and continuity;
- disseminating information on effective transition practices; and
- encouraging greater use of school property, facilities and resources.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Mäori children would benefit from smoother transitions from home to ECE to school. There may need to be a particular focus on Mäori children moving from Mäori immersion EC services into English-medium schools.

⌘ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Pacific children would benefit from smoother transitions from home to ECE to school. There may need to be a particular focus on Pacific children moving from Pacific language immersion EC services into English-medium schools.

2.3 Quality and participation are informed by New Zealand early childhood research

Inform curriculum-related and participation strategies through a programme of ECE research, with a designated pool of funding.

Implementation of *Te Whäriki* and development of EC policy needs to be informed by New Zealand research. There is a notable gap in longitudinal research relating to Mäori and Pacific peoples.

In addition, the Ministry of Education would collaborate with other agencies, e.g., the Ministry of Social Development, in research relating to young children and whänau and families. It would also look for opportunities to tap into other sources of research funding. As the strategic plan is implemented, interested parties would need ongoing evaluation of how it is meeting the strategic goals. Strategies in this plan would need to be adjusted in the light of the results of this evaluation.

Some important and relevant research questions are outlined in the Ministry of Education's strategic research priorities. The Ministry of Education's research division would work with the ECE sector to advance the research programme. The EC centres of innovation would supplement research resources.

Research in kaupapa Mäori and Pacific ECE settings would be done by researchers from these groups.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

This strategy would meet the particular need for research from a Mäori paradigm.

✕ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

There is a particular lack of research in Pacific ECE. Research is needed into areas such as participation and quality in Pacific language immersion services.

DIRECTION THREE: QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

For participation in ECE to be beneficial it must be in quality EC services. These strategies would improve quality through improving the supply of quality teachers, putting in place better ratios and group sizes, improving process quality through legislating *Te Whäriki* , and putting in place ongoing improvement systems and better professional development.

3.1 Legislate *Te Whäriki* for children from birth to 6 years of age in ECE settings

Integrate *Te Whäriki*, the early childhood curriculum for New Zealand, into the legislative framework for ECE to give official recognition to *Te Whäriki* , and signal its equal status to the school curriculum. A clause similar to that pertaining to the school curriculum would be inserted in the Education Act. Provide EC services with more support to implement the curriculum.

This would ensure that *Te Whäriki* is recognised as being:

- the curriculum foundation for early learning;
- appropriate for our wide range of ages and early childhood philosophies and settings;
- inclusive of different cultures and abilities; and
- bicultural and bilingual, supporting the use of the Mäori language.

The Ministry of Education would need to work with the ECE sector, the primary sector, the Teachers Council, and teacher education providers to implement this strategy.

Schools would be encouraged to incorporate the principles and strands of *Te Whäriki* into the teaching of new entrants and would be supplied with a copy of *Te Whäriki.*

Teacher education providers would be encouraged to use *Te Whäriki* in the education of primary as well as ECE teachers.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

This strategy shows greater Government commitment to the bilingual and bicultural nature of *Te Whäriki,* and to reciprocal relationships with iwi, and would improve quality and responsiveness for Mäori in ECE.

✕ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Te Whäriki gives the foundation for Pacific peoples in New Zealand to have distinctive EC services promoting their languages and cultural heritage. Pacific EC services have embraced *Te Whäriki* and welcome the suggestion to recognise it in law. Some of the additional curriculum resources and professional development to support *Te Whäriki* would be designed for use in a Pacific context.

3.2 Regulate qualifications and registration for staff in EC services where teachers are responsible, and for home-based services

Endorse the current legal requirements that:

- kindergarten teachers must be qualified and registered[11] teachers;

- by 2002, those new to the role of "persons responsible" in education and care services and co-ordinators in home-based services, for licensing purposes, will hold a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or equivalent; and

- by 2005, existing "persons responsible" in education and care services and co-ordinators in home-based services, for licensing purposes, will hold a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or equivalent.

This strategy does not apply to parent and whänau EC services provided by the New Zealand Playcentre Federation and the Te Köhanga Reo National Trust.

During the next decade the requirements for education and care centres and home-based services to employ qualified and registered teachers would be progressively extended. The sequence and parameters of the changes would differ for different types of services (see below).

Qualifications & Registration

The long term goal, beyond the term of this strategic plan, is that all regulated staff (i.e. those who are needed to meet ratio requirements) should be registered teachers. Mäori and Pacific immersion and bilingual services, where guardians of the heritage languages are needed for children's learning, would be given additional funding to enable kaitiaki o te reo Mäori and Pacific elders who are the guardians of their heritage language and cultures to be employed over and above the regulated ratios.

Requiring qualified, registered teachers helps to improve the structural quality of EC services. Research consistently shows the importance of teacher education and qualifications. The strategy also acknowledges that each type of EC service warrants its own consideration of what training and qualifications are appropriate.

Teacher registration ensures the quality of teachers because it shows that newly graduated teachers have completed a suitable teacher education programme and are supervised and supported through an advice and guidance programme. Gaining full registration and maintaining a practising certificate assure currency of professional knowledge and practice.

The Education Standards Bill 2001 contains powers for the Minister of Education to set the requirements for qualified and registered teachers for particular types of services. To ensure that there is an effective transition, different processes would be set up for:

- education and care centres (apart from Pacific EC centres);

- Pacific EC centres; and

- home-based services.

By 2005, all "persons responsible" would be registered teachers. By 2007, half of the staff in each centre would have a Teacher Registration Board (TRB)[12] recognised qualification and

[11] Unless otherwise stated, registration includes provisional registration.
[12] TRB responsibilities will be translated to the Teachers Council once the Education Standards Bill become law.

would be registered, and other regulated staff would be in training for a TRB recognised qualification. By 2010, at least 60% of the regulated staff would be registered teachers and the other regulated staff would be in training for a TRB recognised qualification.

In 2006 there would be a review of the transition to registration and of issues around teacher education provision and measures to recruit and train early childhood teachers, in order to consider the progress made towards registration and to make recommendations on what further steps may be needed.

Mäori immersion centres

Given the shortage of appropriately qualified teachers to work in Mäori immersion centres because appropriate teacher education provision in Mäori is not yet widely available, these centres may need longer to fully meet the TRB requirement. How this will be managed needs further consideration.

Pacific EC centres

Given the shortage of appropriate qualified teachers to work in Pacific EC centres, because appropriate teacher education provision in heritage languages is not yet widely available, these centres may need longer to fully meet this requirement. The 2007 review would pay particular attention to the impact on Pacific EC centres.

Home-based services

Home-based service co-ordinators are qualified teachers, working directly with groups of home-based educators, often in their homes. Educators have a range of experiences and access to training opportunities in support of their work with small groups of children. Home-based service co-ordinators will hold a TRB recognised qualification and become registered by 2005. Further work is needed to develop the system of qualifications for home-based educators. The long term goal is for all educators to have an appropriate qualification.

Support for teachers to meet full registration

To meet the requirements for full registration, a provisionally registered teacher requires support and guidance from a registered teacher and release time to undertake an advice and guidance programme. EC services would be funded to ensure that provisionally registered teachers undertaking advice and guidance programmes are entitled to one teaching half-day release time each week. EC services supporting teachers through the registration process would identify a person to take responsibility for supervising the teacher through the advice and guidance programme.

❖ Impact for Mäori

A shortage of appropriate teacher education may mean that Mäori immersion EC services would not be able to meet the proposed timelines. It is also unclear how many Mäori immersion services currently have ECE teachers who will meet the TRB requirements. Recognition of kaitiaki o te reo Mäori would be a positive affirmation of the cultural qualifications of people chosen for such positions.

✕ Impact for Pacific peoples

A shortage of appropriate teacher education may mean that Pacific EC services would not be able to meet the proposed timelines. How this will be managed, while maintaining the quality status of Pacific EC services in relation to other services, needs consideration. Creating a

separate timeframe for Pacific services would give more time to train staff, but could also put quality at risk and impact on pay parity. Recognition of an elder being on the staff as specialist in their language and culture would be a positive development.

3.3 Improve EC service ratios and group size

There would be change to the Education (ECE) Regulations for licensed and chartered centres, to improve ratios of staff to children; improve group size, separate group size from maximum centre size; and ensure that appropriate spaces are available for groups within centres.

A major review of the regulations is proposed (see Direction Four). This is a very complex area of policy, needing in-depth consideration. More work is needed on impacts on participation and on costs before thoroughgoing changes are gazetted. In the interim, there would be two ratio and two group size improvements to address serious inadequacies in these areas:

- under twos ratios changed to 1:3 (actually 2:6); and
- sessional services over twos ratio changed to 1:13 (actually 2:26).

In the interim, there would be a progressive reduction to a maximum group size of 39 for the over twos age groups. At the same time, there would be a progressive reduction to a maximum group size to 21 for under twos. This would improve the quality of interactions within early childhood settings.

In the longer term the aim is to move to a system where group sizes[13] are established in regulation, rather than the regulations defining the maximum numbers of children in a centre. Given the costs of converting buildings, group sizes would become a requirement for new, larger centres, and would be described as desirable for existing services. However, group size would never be feasible for hospital EC services.

Ratios and group size would be tied to more developmentally appropriate regulations on the use of space in centres. There would be review of ratios, group size and the use of space as part of the proposed regulations review, calling on appropriate ECE sector expertise.

Staffing goal

The ratio regulations set the numbers of people who must be present in an EC service and can also be used to set out what types of staff can be counted for the ratio. Our registration strategy proposes that over time, an increasing proportion of staff counted for the ratios would have to be registered teachers.[14]

The process for this strategy would link to the review of the regulations. Any changes to ratios and group sizes would need to be carried out in consultation with the ECE sector and have adequate forward notice.

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[13] A group could be defined as a number of children assigned to a teacher/educator/kaiako (or team of these) occupying a well-defined space, with physical barriers that inhibit the intermingling of children between groups, although regrouping at times would be permitted.

[14] This proposal would not apply to parent and whānau EC services provided by the New Zealand Playcentre Federation Inc or Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust Inc.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

This strategy has human resource implications for Mäori immersion EC centres, as it would require more staff with fluency in te reo Mäori. Changes to group size or space requirements would have cultural implications for nurturing tuakana/teina relationships inherent in whänaungatanga.

❖ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

There are major resource implications for Pacific bilingual and immersion EC centres, which need to have staff and volunteers with fluent language.

3.4 Improve the supply of quality teachers through improved capacity and quality of teacher education, recruitment and retention measures, and pay parity

Improve the supply, distribution, responsiveness and quality of early childhood teacher education.

We need:

- high quality teacher education providers who meet the requirements of the Teachers Council (or Teacher Registration Board);
- ongoing planning of teacher education provision that ensures there are enough teacher education places to meet needs[15];
- teacher education provision that is responsive to Mäori needs in general EC services;
- teacher education provision that meets the need for teachers in kaupapa Mäori education;
- inclusive teacher education provision that meets the needs of Pacific peoples, including programmes for bilingual and immersion teachers;
- retention initiatives, such as registration supervision training funded by the Ministry of Education;
- pay parity with primary and secondary teachers for all qualified and registered teachers employed in EC services;
- the revised formula for Government funding (the Sustainability strategies) to EC services taking into account the cost of pay parity with primary and secondary teachers; and
- initiatives that bring more men into education roles in the sector.

This mix, including the strong incentive of pay parity, would ensure that there are enough appropriately qualified teachers in *all* services to take responsibility for implementing the curriculum, and to meet future needs through diverse services for diverse populations.

Pay parity for kindergarten teachers[16] will have a flow on effect, as recruitment from the same pool of qualified staff means other employers would have to pay that rate. Where pay parity is

[15] Including specialised services such as Montessori EC Services.

not fully funded, expenses may be passed on to families, reducing participation. This would also impact adversely on the Government goal that people with children would be able to participate in the workforce. Other strategies would need to be introduced to reduce these impacts.

With planned provision of quality teacher education programmes by the Tertiary Education Commission (to be established in 2001), this Commission could ensure that specific providers deliver a qualification programme endorsed by the Teachers' Council, and meet the expectations of Mäori, Pacific peoples and "general" EC services.

A range of initiatives to ensure sufficient enrolments to match the numbers and types of teachers needed would be implemented. Effectiveness would be carefully monitored over time so that these can be adapted to changing needs. The initiatives would include:

- researching barriers to enrolment in and successful completion of early childhood teacher education programmes;
- extending and refining the policies implemented in 2000/2001 to meet the 2005 requirements for teacher registration, including provision of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and upgrade courses;
- supplementing funding for distance / open / flexible / mixed media delivery;
- resolving training funding issues with the Te Köhanga Reo National Trust and New Zealand Playcentre Federation;
- promoting bridging courses for those with primary teaching qualifications;
- reinstating the process of attestation for Kaitiaki o te Reo Mäori;
- assisting TRB approved providers and Pacific peoples to develop and provide approved early childhood teacher education programmes and provide the unit-standards based National Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood Education (Pacific) (Level 7);
- extending mentoring programmes or using Mäori professional advisors to support Mäori teachers during their teacher education programme;
- extending mentoring programmes or using Pacific advisors to support Pacific student teachers; and
- ensuring that the TRB maintains a single register for all teachers, including EC teachers.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Greatly increased numbers of Mäori EC teachers are needed for the increasing number of Mäori children and the growing demand for Mäori immersion services. Specific immersion teacher education programmes are required. There may be some Mäori-specific issues for retention which would need Mäori-specific solutions.

Te Köhanga Reo National Trust would need to have the Whakapakari Tohu recognised by the TRB for kaiako with this qualification to come within the unified pay system. Further development of this strategy needs to take into account the outcome of the review of the relationship between the Crown and the Trust.

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[16] The Government has set up a ministerial working group to establish benchmarks and recommend a phased approach for implementation of pay parity for kindergarten teachers, to commence from 1 July 2002. Primary and secondary teachers have a unified pay scale based on qualifications, service and responsibilities.

✕ Impact for Pacific peoples

Greatly increased numbers of Pacific ECE teachers are needed for the increasing number of children with Pacific heritage and growing demand for Pacific services. There is a need for specific teacher education programmes preparing teachers with the skills and knowledge needed in Pacific EC services.

Current provision could be supplemented by supporting teacher education providers and Pacific peoples to offer programmes based on the unit-standards-based National Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood Education (Pacific) (Level 7) that is being readied for registration on the National Qualifications Framework. The impact of recruitment and retention strategies over time, including pay parity, needs to be reviewed.

3.5 Recognise the quality of EC services provided by parents and whānau

This strategy applies to services operated by parents and whānau, including services operated under the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust and the New Zealand Playcentre Federation Inc., and licence-exempt playgroups.

New Zealand has a long tradition of parent and whānau provided services under umbrella organisations such as the New Zealand Playcentre Federation Inc.[17] and the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust.[18] Both movements make valuable contributions to parents over and above the benefits accruing to children. In addition over 800 licence-exempt groups, established and run by parents and whānau for their children, play an especially important role for Pacific peoples and in isolated communities, where they may be the only available early childhood experience. This strategy recognises that such services achieve quality practice in different ways from teacher-led services[19], and seeks to reinforce and build on their strengths.

The proposals include streamlining regulations and other systems, such as funding systems, in ways that promote parent and whānau learning, and quality education and care, while reducing compliance burdens; and supporting parents and whānau involved in licence-exempt groups to provide a quality service. Initiatives would include:

- reviewing the impact of the regulations on these EC services, in consultation with the New Zealand Playcentre Federation, the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust and other interested parent and whānau groups. The intended outcome is to have regulations or an Order in Council that supports them as services for children *and* parents and whānau.

- incorporating the current system of licence-exempt groups within the regulatory environment for EC services by including the current Early Childhood Development "criteria" in, say, a Playgroup Order in Council, rather than exempting them.

- recognising the ways in which licence-exempt groups meet quality standards without imposing unnecessary compliance costs.

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17 The Federation's mission statement is "Quality ECE - a co-operative family/whānau experience".

18 In *Te Korowai* the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust sets out the kaupapa (policy) for Te Kōhanga Reo which is "a total immersion Te Reo Māori whānau programme for mokopuna from birth to 6 years of age to be raised within its whānau , where the language of communication will be Māori".

19 As defined in the Desirable Objectives and Practices, *Te Korowai* and *Whāriki*.

- developing mechanisms to increase support for those groups, such as professional development and itinerant teachers.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

This strategy would provide for the development of a system of regulation and support in the delivery of high quality ECE and whänau development for services operating on the basis of whänau involvement.

✖ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

This strategy would provide new opportunities for Pacific parents, families and communities to provide services that recognise their cultural heritages and support their heritage languages. Pacific itinerant teachers or support workers would be used to support Pacific parents and whänau providing licence-exempt groups.

3.6 Ensure ongoing improvement through review and evaluation

Under this strategy, excellent practice in EC service self-review leading to ongoing improvement would be progressively extended across licensed and chartered EC services.

External evaluations by the Education Review Office (ERO) would stimulate EC services to take an improvement approach, with emphasis on the services' own management goals and review processes and on curriculum, teaching and learning. ERO reviews would occur more frequently (every three years). ERO would also continue to conduct monitoring reviews, short-notice reviews and review of particular areas of focus, such as cultural sensitivity.

Swift action from the Ministry of Education and ERO is needed where outcomes for children could be harmed. In such cases the Ministry would act quickly to move the EC service to a provisional licence and provide advice and support, or to remove the licence.

EC services would carry out self-review. External reviews by ERO would check self-review processes and the use made of them. Effective implementation of services' self-review and good external review would require development of indicators of quality practice (that build on the base of the Desirable Objectives and Practices, *Te Korowai,* and *The Quality Journey*, and models and exemplars of self-review processes). It would also require:

- professional support for services to undertake self review and link these with improvement; and

- ongoing co-ordination between the Ministry of Education and ERO, and changed roles for ERO, as proposed by the Ministerial Review Committee (2000).[20]

The focus of self-review would be on the provision of high quality ECE for children. It would need a strong capacity for self-review within the sector, and processes that reflect the diversity of EC services. External evaluations would need to be linked to services' goals and assistance would be needed from support services. Poor quality services would be helped or closed.

[20] For example, EC services would strongly support the recommendation that "Wherever possible, no less than half of each review team has the appropriate knowledge base i.e. of early childhood services, primary, secondary and kaupapa Mäori institutions and special education services."

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Ensuring that all licensed and chartered EC services practices embody *Te Korowai* or the Desirable Objectives and Practices and the statement on the unique place of Mäori would improve the quality of EC services for Mäori children.

✕ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Ongoing quality improvement processes that include measures to increase the responsiveness of EC services to their communities would improve the quality of ECE for Pacific children.

3.7 Provide professional development appropriate to setting and circumstances

Develop a revised system that:

- is focused on the educational aspects of EC services;
- covers Aotearoa/New Zealand;
- includes appropriate provision for Mäori and Pacific peoples; and
- enhances professional development providers' responsiveness to services' needs.

Professional development would be available for all types of EC services, including licence-exempt groups.

The Ministry of Education's current approach to tendering would be reviewed to foster greater collaboration, improve coverage and responsiveness to EC services, and minimise other inadequacies. Professional development would be focused on areas of need. Submitters proposed the following as priority topics: governance/management knowledge and skills, self-reviews, working with children with special educational needs, knowledge of te reo Mäori and tikanga Mäori, and knowledge of other cultures.

Special character services, such as hospital services, would continue to access specialised professional development.

Pacific and Mäori providers would be contracted to deliver professional development for EC services where there are a high number of Mäori and Pacific children enrolled. The Ministry of Education would improve its monitoring and mapping of professional development uptake, and act promptly to address local needs.

Further review would be carried out in 2005-6 when greater numbers of educators have become registered teachers.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

The professional development system would support nga köhanga reo, through a collaborative relationship with Te Köhanga Reo National Trust, and Mäori immersion EC services. Professional development policy needs to enhance the responsiveness of providers and all EC services to Mäori.

⚹ Impact for Pacific peoples

Professional development programmes and professional development providers would be adapted to the needs of the growing number of immersion and bilingual Pacific EC services.

3.8 Support leadership development

ECE service leaders would have access to leadership education and training to build skills and knowledge about governance, management and administration of EC services. Educational leadership would be supported by assisting EC teachers and educators to act as professional leaders through training and development programmes.

The level of need for leadership training, and the form that leadership training should take, would be examined as part of developing policy around the advice and support needs of the ECE sector. Leadership education about engendering positive organisational cultures has been identified as a priority topic.

❖ Impact for Mäori

Leadership training would enable Mäori to fill leadership roles so that whakaaro Mäori is implemented, reciprocal relationships are evident, and whänau are strengthened.

⚹ Impact for Pacific peoples

This strategy would empower Pacific peoples to develop their skills and capacity to provide EC services and to make their voices heard amongst other EC services providers and professional leaders.

3.9 Develop and implement a te reo Mäori language policy for ECE teacher education and programmes

Develop a language policy for early childhood education to provide direction and support for early childhood services delivering in te reo Mäori, and to strengthen the use and understanding of te reo Mäori in all early childhood settings.

Early childhood education is important to the revival and maintenance of the Mäori language. Te reo Mäori as an official language of this country holds special recognition and therefore it is crucial that all New Zealand children have access to it. *Te Whäriki* as a bicultural and bilingual curriculum requires specialised skills and knowledge to be fully implemented. Understanding and knowledge of te reo Mäori is learnt best within an appropriate context and because of this we advocate that the learning of te reo Mäori must take place alongside learning about tikanga Mäori. Mäori would determine how this takes place with the support of the Ministry of Education and Te Taura Whiri I Te Reo Mäori (Mäori Language Commission).

A language policy for te reo Mäori would:

- Develop strategies to ensure that teachers and educators acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes to help all children participate and succeed in our education system
- Make recommendations on the provision and monitoring of teacher education programmes
- Monitor research in immersion and bilingual education, including quality in language immersion and bilingual services (what is it?, have we got it?) and the effect on children's

language acquisition when children participate in immersion services where the language of that service is not their main language

- Assist transition from immersion and bilingual early childhood services to English based schooling
- Develop a framework for the use of te reo Mäori in all EC services
- Assist te reo Mäori to become a core component of teacher education programmes
- Recommend on development of resources in te reo Mäori
- Inform Government policy development.

❖ **Impact for Mäori**

A language policy would strengthen reciprocal relationships, and support te reo Mäori as an official language and its use by children and adults in ECE.

3.10 Develop and implement a languages policy for ECE teacher education and programmes

Develop a languages policy for ECE to provide directions for the EC services that operate in languages other than English and Mäori, and for EC services that enrol children from families where the mother tongue is neither English nor Mäori.

A policy framework needs to be developed that takes account of research evidence on quality in language immersion and bilingual services; the effect on children's language acquisition when children participate in immersion services whose language is not their main language; and transition from immersion and bilingual ECE to English-based schooling. The development of a languages policy would include consideration of:

- teacher education for those who work with families who have languages other than English;
- the funding of services;
- curriculum resources;
- research including quality in language immersion and bilingual services and the effect on children's language acquisition when children participate in immersion services in a language that is not their main language;
- support for the transition from immersion and bilingual EC services to English based schooling (this links to the continuity in education for children from birth to 8 years strategy); and
- resources in Pacific languages.

The policy needs to foster educational achievement of children with languages other than English, and afford protection to heritage languages and cultures.

✕ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Pacific language immersion services would be supported in their delivery of education in heritage languages. Pacific families in mainstream services would be better supported.

3.11 Showcase excellent programmes through centres of innovation

EC services would apply to receive additional funding as a designated centre of innovation for three to four years. The purpose of the funding would be for receiving visitors, and for action research and dissemination activities. The small number of centres of innovation would be showcase services and disseminate information about New Zealand's contribution to best practice in ECE. Some capital works may be needed for space for working with adults.

Funding would be "rolling" so that, over time, a diverse range of EC services in various locations would get the opportunity to demonstrate excellence in a number of areas.

To be selected, a centre of innovation would need to demonstrate excellent practice in cultural sensitivity, exemplary implementation of the DOPs and *Te Whäriki* , and one or a number of other areas of practice, for example:

- excellent practice in reviews and quality improvement;
- "community of learning" approaches (collaboration and co-ordination between EC services, parenting programmes, schools, health and social services – see below);
- excellent practice in kaupapa Mäori education;
- excellent practice in Pacific language bilingual or immersion education;
- excellent practice for infants or children with special needs; and
- new research ideas in practice.

The Ministry of Education would need to co-ordinate the development of centres of innovation in consultation with ECE researchers and the sector. This strategy provides opportunities for whänau development and building on Ministry of Education reciprocal relationships with iwi.

❖ Impact for Mäori

One or more of these centres of innovation would be a kaupapa Mäori ECE setting, for example köhanga reo.

⚹ Impact for Pacific peoples

This strategy creates opportunities to develop innovative practice to improve the quality of service to Pacific children.

DIRECTION FOUR: SUSTAINABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

To support participation in quality ECE, EC services need to be sustainable and affordable. Cost is a major barrier to access and quality provision. These strategies would see Government developing a responsive funding formula and regulating for quality, while ensuring compliance loads are not too onerous.

4.1 Revise funding levels and arrangements to promote high quality, sustainable and affordable EC services

Our long term vision is that all children would have a universal entitlement to a reasonable amount of free early childhood education. Provision of free ECE would enable access for those children whose parents wish them to attend. Such an entitlement would put children's interests first.

Substantive steps for implementation of this vision beyond the timeframe of this plan are included in Appendix A. This immediate strategy sets out the first steps.

These steps would improve the funding levels and systems (Ministry of Education Bulk Grant, Ministry of Social Development's Childcare Subsidy, Equity Funding, and Discretionary Grants Scheme). The Ministry of Education would work with the ECE sector and, in relation to the childcare subsidy the Ministry of Social Development, to revise the funding systems and take into account the costs faced by EC services. The delivery of funding, accountability for funding and levels of funding to support sustainable and affordable quality EC services would be revised.

Funding levels would be sufficient to cover the cost of well resourced learning environments, fairly compensated and well qualified staff, a fair and equitable level of support for parents and whānau-provided services, and inclusion of children with special educational needs. Funding would also ensure that participation in ECE does not depend on parents' ability to pay.

There would be an annual overview of the performance of the early childhood sector so that the public is informed and useful monitoring can occur.

Revised Ministry of Education funding for sustainability

For licensed and chartered services, there would be a new funding formula based on cost factors (operational, staffing, and advice and support) and modelled for each service type.

The overall principle would be that a single funding model is applied, but that weightings for the cost factors could differ for different types of service. For example, services employing paid staff could have a higher staffing grant, and centres run by parents and whānau could have a higher advice and support grant. The new formula (and planning action steps) would consider the current issues of small services being disadvantaged and quality being compromised. There would also be mechanisms to ensure that funding is reviewed in light of any major changes in costs faced by EC services.

In the interim, an across-the-board increase in bulk funding would be necessary to sustain services as they face increased costs.

For licence-exempt groups, a review would also be carried out.

Equity funding will be implemented in January 2002. An evaluation of equity funding is already planned. Once this is completed, there would be consideration of whether there should be additional funding to EC services focused on community or programme need and what funding methods could be used.

Revised funding for affordability

Affordability would be promoted through appropriate levels of funding for all services, equity funding and funding focused on need. This funding would include a childcare subsidy, as this would continue to be necessary for some families.[21] The childcare subsidy would be revised in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Development, so that it is simpler to implement. Families would still need to meet low-income, employment and training, and health/disability criteria.

Revised funding rules and accountability

The revision of funding systems would also look at the funding rules and accountability requirements of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development, so that unnecessary barriers to accessing funding are removed. This would include a revision of rules and processes. The following requirements would be introduced:

- the Ministry of Education would be asked to develop guidelines and a model for accounts to EC services and that EC services would be encouraged to adopt these guidelines for financial reporting; and

- the Minister of Education would provide an annual consolidated report on the performance of EC services to Parliament.

The Ministry of Education would be asked to carry out further work on how staff and parents might have a voice in decision-making.

❖ Impact for Mäori

Funding arrangements need to recognise the additional costs often faced by nga köhanga reo and Mäori immersion EC services in preparing their own resources, engaging fluent speakers, and supporting the engagement of whänau and learning of kaiako. Affordable EC services would remove the major barrier of cost that exists for some Mäori families.

✕ Impact for Pacific peoples

Improving funding levels to EC services and making EC services more affordable would make Pacific services more sustainable and more affordable for parents. Pacific families with low incomes may not be able to afford to pay fees for EC services. This makes Pacific EC services vulnerable, as they cannot raise fees if funding falls short.

4.2 Review regulations and compliance

There would be review and amendment of current regulatory and compliance requirements on EC services, from the Education Act 1989 to funding rules contained in the Early Childhood Funding Handbook, as necessary to bring into force all the policy changes recommended in

[21] In April 2001, more than 8,500 children attending 20 hours or more were receiving the Childcare Subsidy.

the strategic plan, while encouraging quality. Underlying concerns about how the regulatory system works and the compliance load it imposes would be addressed.

The Ministry of Education would review the regulatory system – for licence-exempt, licensed and chartered, and home-based services - in consultation with the early childhood sector. Working groups would be established where particular interests are affected or technical sector expertise is required, e.g., in considering ratios, group size and space.

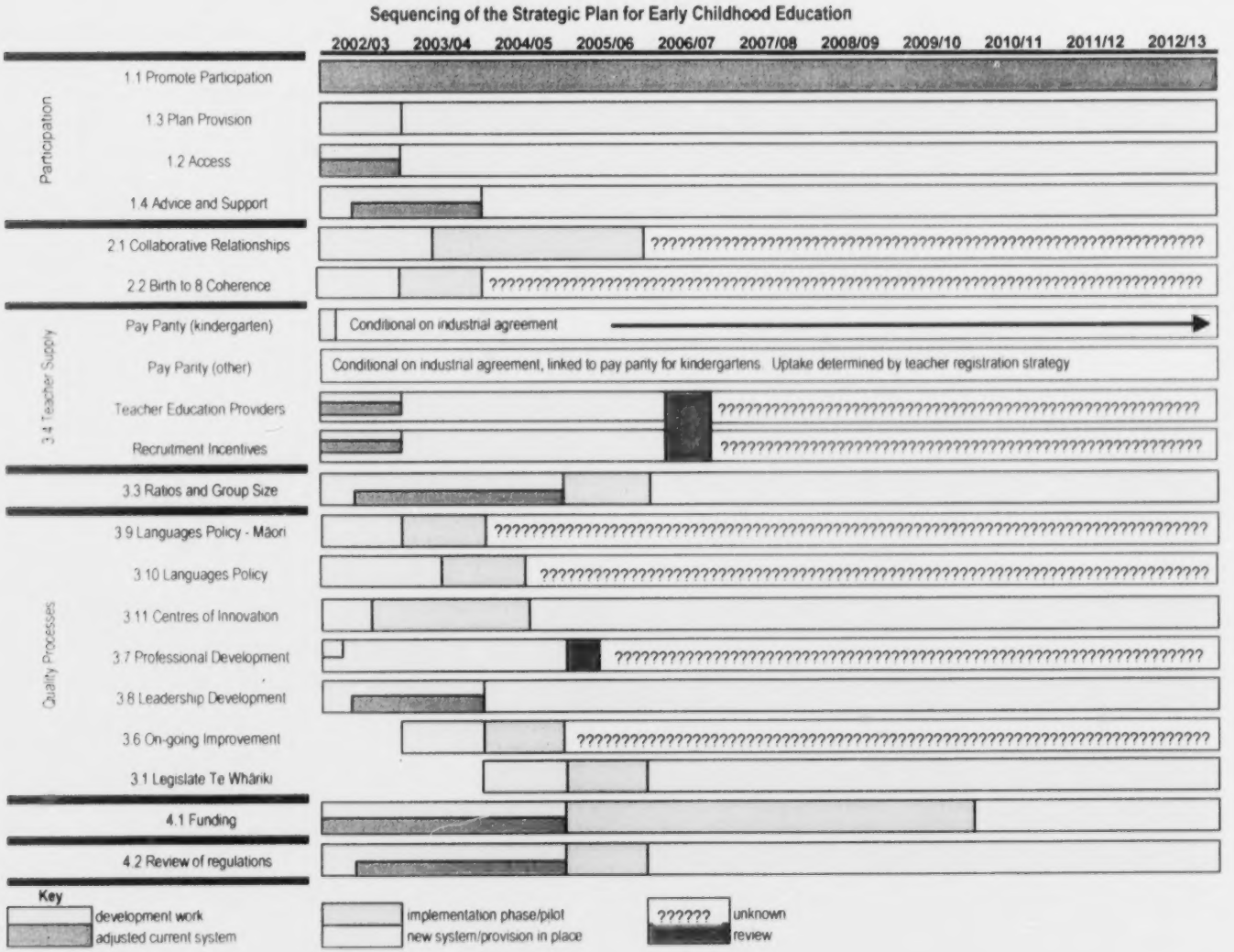
❖ **Impact for Mäori**

Mäori EC services may face particular barriers in meeting the ECE regulations. A review of the regulations would examine the compliance load on EC services. It would consider the Treaty of Waitangi statement in the DOPs, examine interpretation of regulations from a Mäori perspective, and explore ways of bringing the regulations in line with the needs of tamariki and whänau, where this is an issue.

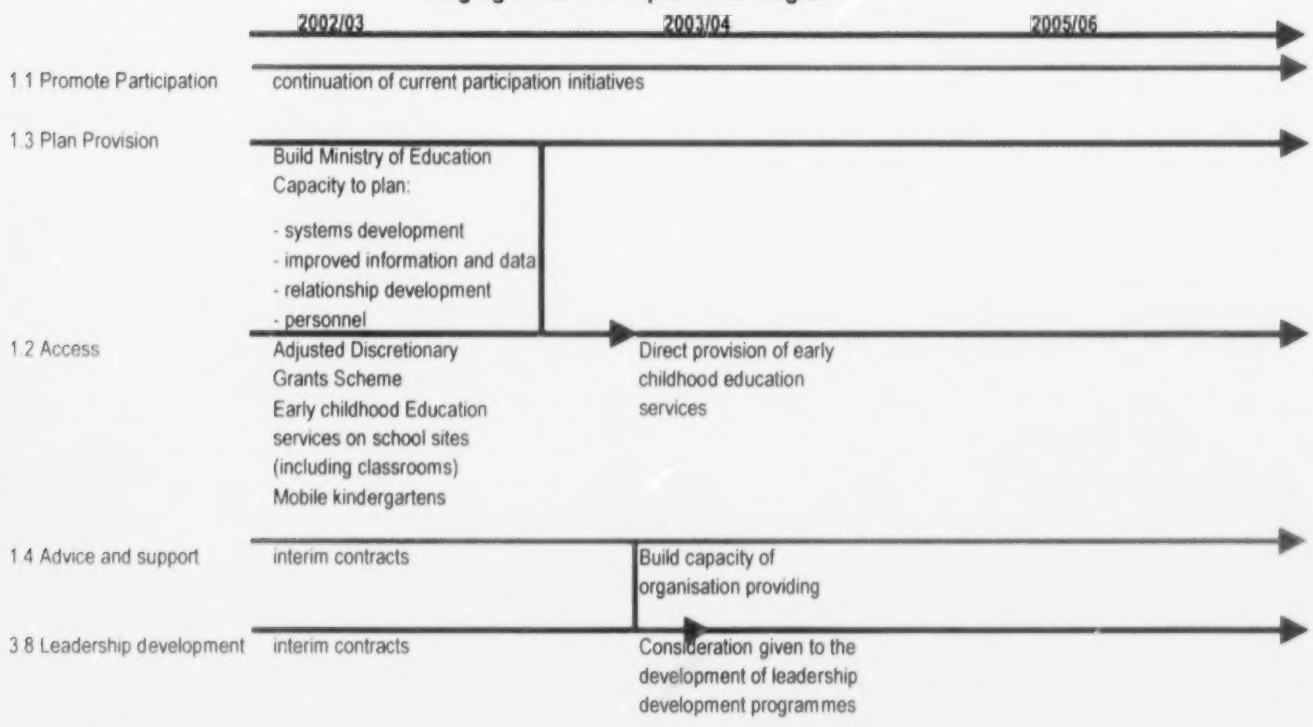
✕ **Impact for Pacific peoples**

Pacific EC services may face particular barriers in meeting the ECE regulations. A review of the regulations would examine the compliance load on EC services. It would also explore ways of bringing the regulations in line with cultural values and philosophies of Pacific peoples, where this is an issue.

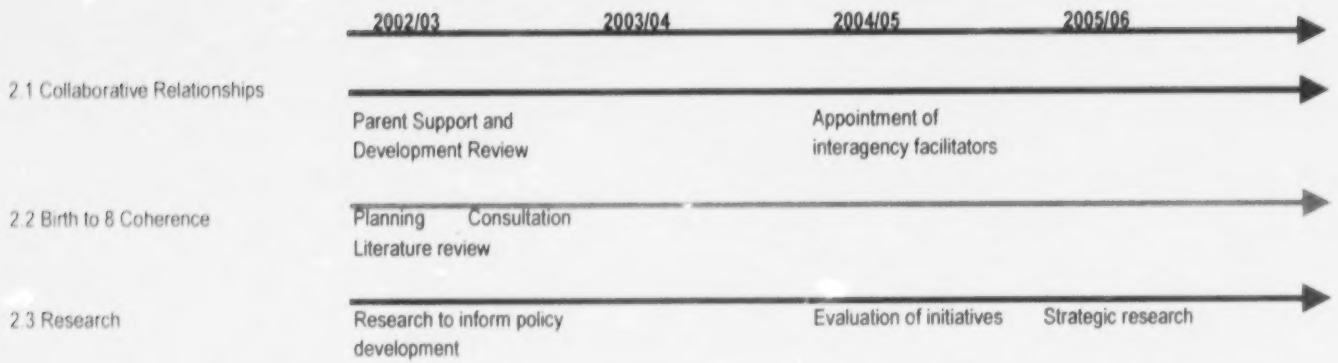
C. Strategic Plan Implementation

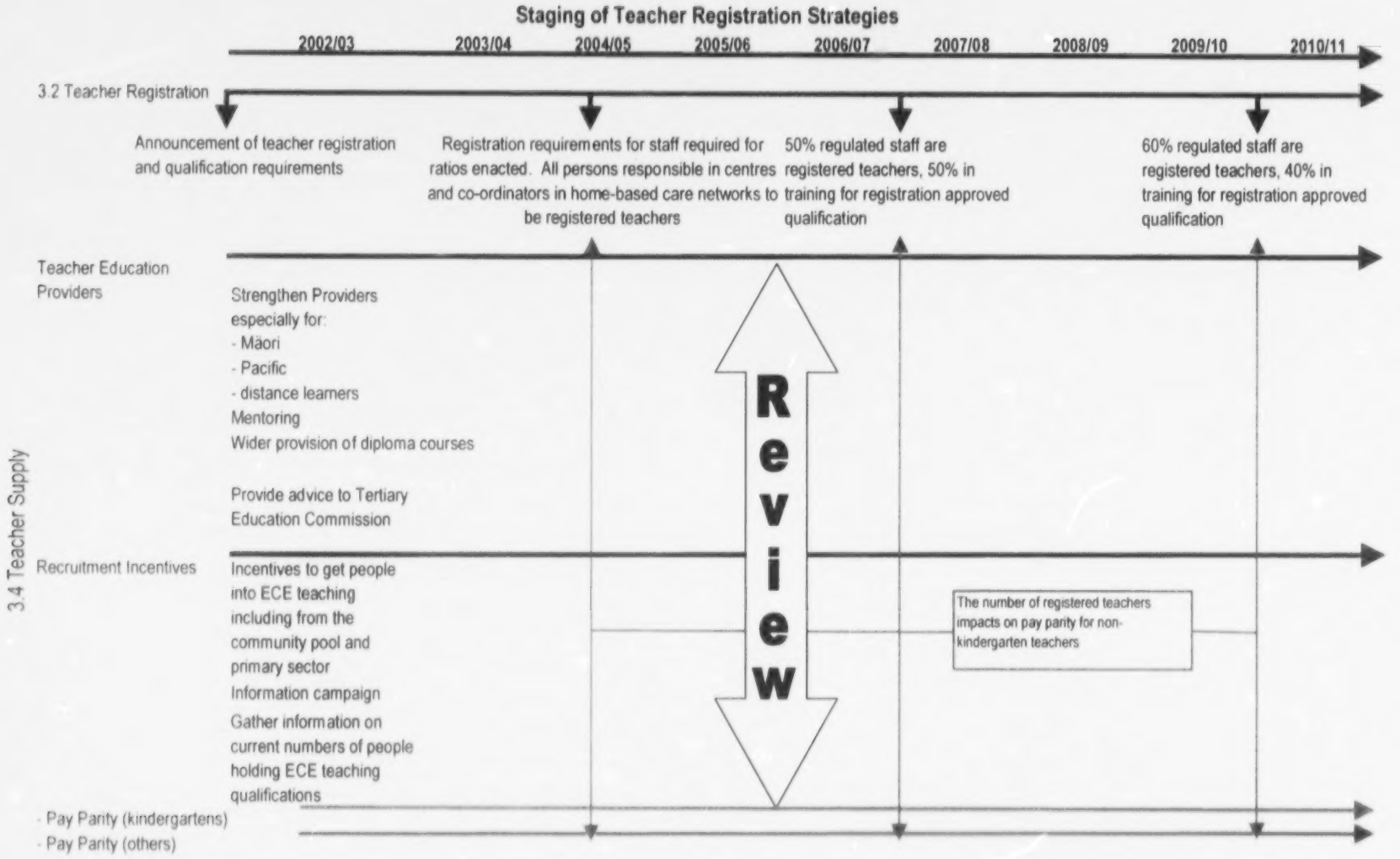


Staging of the Participation Strategies

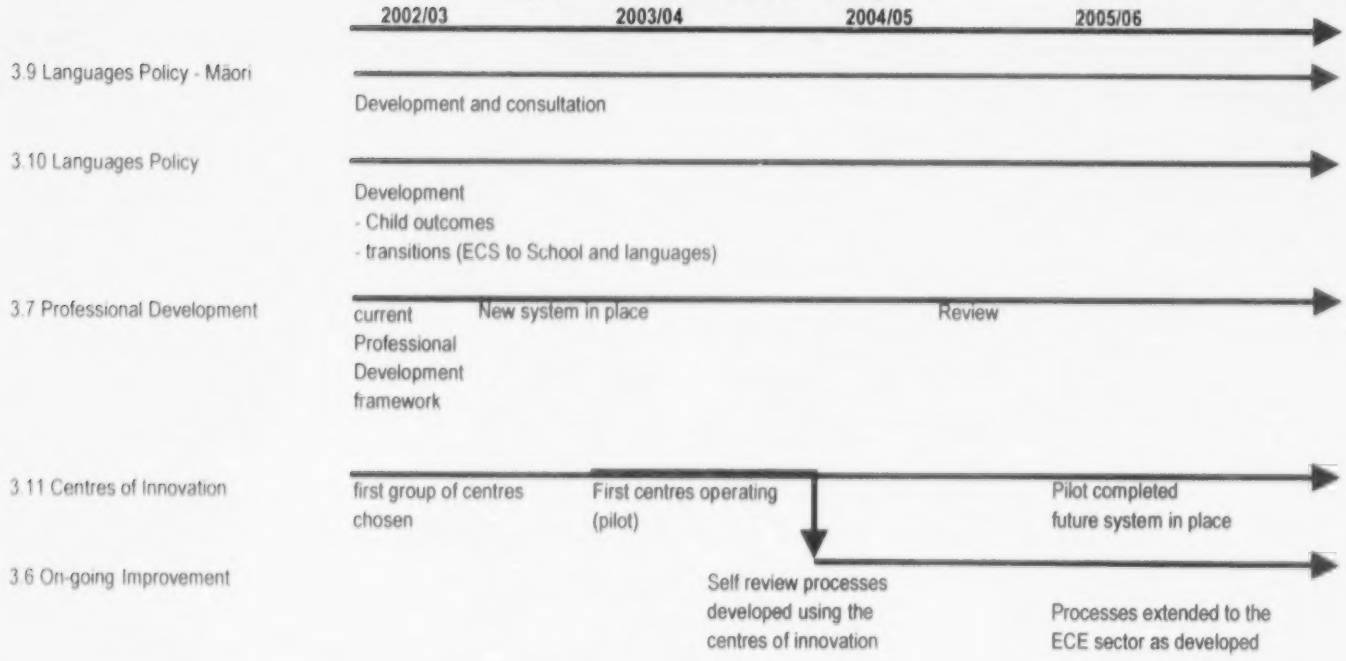


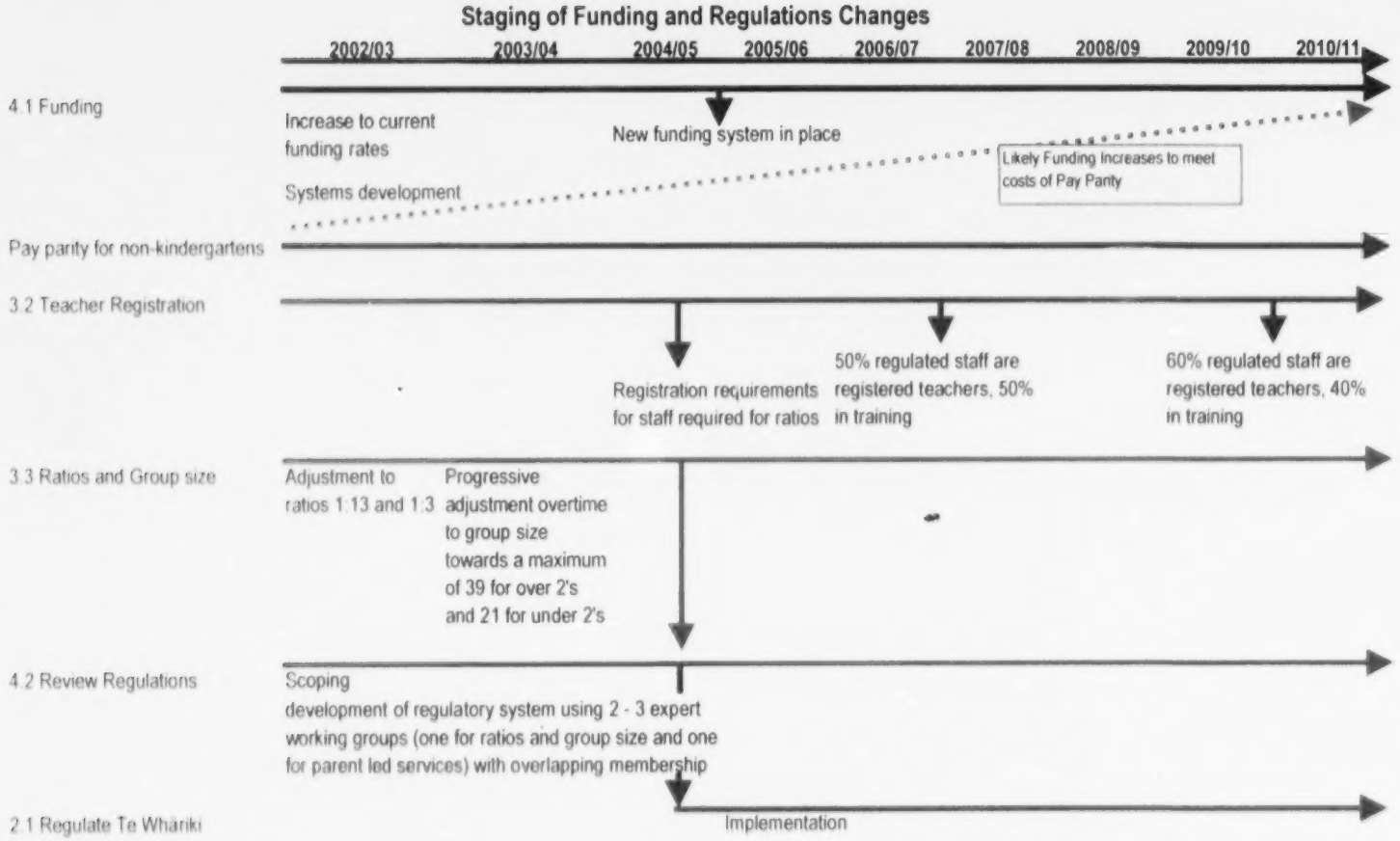
Staging of the Collaborative Relationships Strategies




Staging of Teacher Registration Strategies
2002/03
2003/04
2004/05
2005/06
2006/07
2007/08
2008/09
2009/10
2010/11
3.2 Teacher Registration
Announcement of teacher registration and qualification requirements
Registration requirements for staff required for ratios enacted. All persons responsible in centres and co-ordinators in home-based care networks to be registered teachers
50% regulated staff are registered teachers, 50% in training for registration approved qualification
60% regulated staff are registered teachers, 40% in training for registration approved qualification
3.4 Teacher Supply
Teacher Education Providers
Strengthen Providers especially for:
- Māori
- Pacific
- distance learners
Mentoring
Wider provision of diploma courses
Provide advice to Tertiary Education Commission
Review
Recruitment Incentives
Incentives to get people into ECE teaching including from the community pool and primary sector
Information campaign
Gather information on current numbers of people holding ECE teaching qualifications
The number of registered teachers impacts on pay parity for non-kindergarten teachers
- Pay Parity (kindergartens)
- Pay Parity (others)

Staging of Quality Processes Strategies




Staging of Funding and Regulations Changes
2002/03
2003/04
2004/05
2005/06
2006/07
2007/08
2008/09
2009/10
2010/11
4.1 Funding
Increase to current funding rates
New funding system in place
Likely Funding Increases to meet costs of Pay Parity
Systems development
Pay parity for non-kindergartens
3.2 Teacher Registration
Registration requirements for staff required for ratios
50% regulated staff are registered teachers, 50% in training
60% regulated staff are registered teachers, 40% in training
3.3 Ratios and Group size
Adjustment to ratios 1:13 and 1:3
Progressive adjustment overtime to group size towards a maximum of 39 for over 2's and 21 for under 2's
4.2 Review Regulations
Scoping
development of regulatory system using 2 - 3 expert working groups (one for ratios and group size and one for parent led services) with overlapping membership
2.1 Regulate Te Whāriki
Implementation

Sequencing

The diagrams (above) show the recommended sequence for putting in place the four strategic directions contained in this report. To sequence and prioritise, we have determined which strategies in each direction need to go first in order to realise the vision of the strategic plan.

The vision of the strategic plan has significant implications for the role of Government. The Government is to take a much more "hands on" and responsive approach to the needs of the early childhood sector. This requires significant systemic change. In many instances these systems need to be in place before other aspects of the plan can proceed (e.g. planning needs to be in place before significant capital investment to improve access can take place, and an improved funding system is needed provide for the differential impact of pay parity.) An initial boost in funding is provided to ensure that services remain sustainable while larger changes are being developed.

The registration and ratio strategies within Direction Two, quality early childhood services, are dependent on the supply of qualified teachers and initiatives to increase teacher supply must start in the first year. In the first year we can begin developing and piloting quality processes. This would allow us to make some quality gains while teacher supply catches up.

The success of the collaborative relationships direction would depend to a large measure on improved relationships and inter-agency co-ordination. Some EC services in some areas already have such relationships in place. In some communities where the need for co-ordinated services is greatest, people would be needed to facilitate networking and outreach services (perhaps as network co-ordinators). It is going to take time and significant support and leadership from Government and organisations to build collaborative relationships. This work needs to start in the first year.

DIRECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION, ENGAGEMENT AND ACCESS

A network approach

Ensuring that existing services remain open and are responsive to community needs can increase access to EC services. Where there are still gaps in provision new services would be created. To do this the Government needs to take a more active role in network provision. This would involve taking a more planned approach to network provision and an enhanced advice and support system for vulnerable EC services. It would also involve working with EC services that need to adapt delivery of service to respond to changing community needs

The Government already has a substantial ownership and purchase interest in ECE, through historic ownership of some ECE properties and an annual capital grants programme (the discretionary grants scheme). Systems are needed to ensure that:

- both existing and future resources are invested wisely; and
- increases in participation do not come at the expense of the quality of provision.

Failure to establish such systems would result in worse outcomes for children and wasteful use of Government resources. To achieve this Government needs more and better information on the network of EC services, and stronger and better relationships with communities, EC services and other social service providers.

In order to maintain a network of EC services the Government needs to ensure that vulnerable EC services receive advice and support. To achieve this the Government needs to have an

advice and support structure that would identify vulnerable EC services and provide access to support that meet the EC services needs, including providing access to leadership development that would build governance and management capacity in vulnerable EC services.

DIRECTION TWO: COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

A child's learning and development is dependent not only on the ECE environment they experience, but also on their home and wider social environment. The collection of children and families together in EC services also provides opportunities for addressing health and social issues. In addition, improved links between EC services, parents and whānau, parenting programmes, schools, ESOL providers, health and social services, can improve child outcomes by enabling children's development needs to be met more holistically.

In the short term, this would involve the development and dissemination of parenting resources and building information maps to assist parents, whānau and EC services to link better with health and other social service providers. A review of Government funded parent support and development programmes is currently underway. Over a longer timeframe this is likely to result in changes to the way in which Government invests in parent support and development.

DIRECTION THREE: QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Improved ratios for improved quality

Putting in place better ratios and group sizes until a full review can be carried out is an immediate priority for the strategic plan. Responses to the consultation in August 2001 showed very high levels of support for our proposal to introduce these changes at the beginning of the plan. Regulatory change to the new ratios and group sizes would be made early so that the transition to the new ratios would start at the beginning of the plan

A focus on teacher supply

Our long term strategies to improve quality are focussed on increasing the supply of qualified and registered teachers. For teacher-led services, teacher supply is the biggest barrier to quality EC services in the short to medium term. In the long term, pay parity for trained and registered teachers may be the most effective and sustainable way for Government to improve the qualification levels of ECE teachers. For the medium term, it would be important to run a mix of teacher supply strategies, including:

- research on barriers to enrolment in and successful completion of early childhood teacher education programmes;
- extending and refining the policies implemented in 2000/2001 to meet the 2005 requirements for teacher registration, including provision of RPL and upgrade courses;
- supplementing funding for distance / open / flexible / mixed media delivery;
- resolving training funding issues with the Te Köhanga Reo National Trust and New Zealand Playcentre Federation;
- promoting bridging courses for those with primary teaching qualifications;
- reinstating the process of attestation for Kaitiaki o te Reo Mäori;

- assisting TRB approved providers and Pacific peoples to develop and provide approved early childhood teacher education programmes provide the unit-standards based National Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood Education (Pacific) (Level 7);

- extending mentoring programmes or using Mäori professional advisors to support Mäori teachers during their teacher education programme;

- extending mentoring programmes or using Pacific advisors to support Pacific student teachers; and

- ensuring the Teachers' Council (or TRB) maintains a single register for all teachers, including EC teachers.

Responses to the August 2001 consultation showed strong support for the qualification and registration strategy. These responses also showed concerns about teacher supply and emphasised the importance of strategies, particularly pay parity, to increase the supply of teachers, as part of the implementation of the registration and qualification strategies.

It would take a significant period of time for increases in the numbers of qualified teachers to take effect. It is important that there is early commencement of these strategies, in order to get a more qualified workforce in a reasonable timeframe. In the meantime, we need to ensure that quality processes are in place in EC services by implementing our proposals to support and increase the quality of teaching and learning, using the current workforce.

Quality processes

This includes two elements, both of which have high priority:

- development of a te reo Mäori policy to support Mäori immersion services and strengthen the use and understanding of te reo Mäori in all early childhood settings; and
- development of a languages policy to provide a direction for the EC services that operate in languages other than English.

The need for this policy was particularly emphasised in responses to the August 2001 consultation. The lack of provision in heritage language settings is an identified barrier to participation for Pacific families. There is a need to ensure that provision in such settings results in quality outcomes for children, as well as maintenance of heritage languages and cultures, and does not place them at risk of future educational underachievement.

The early development of Centres of Innovation would enable the piloting of quality processes and provide a practical research base to develop models of quality practice, such as:

- resources to enable teachers to better implement *Te Whäriki*;

- quality indicators; and

- self-review processes.

The centres would also pilot coordination of EC services and parenting programmes, social service co-ordination, and "ECE outreach" services to homes.

Work, to be undertaken within current baselines, would commence in the first year on:

- review of the provision of Professional Development for the early childhood sector to bring it into line with the strategic objectives of the plan; and
- policy development on improving the coherence of education from birth to 8 years old with possible initiatives in the next budget.

Recognition of parent-led services

A review of the regulatory framework for parent-led services, such as playcentres, köhanga reo and licence-exempt playgroups, is a priority. It is important for these services to be fostered and recognised within a coherent regulatory regime that ensures the quality of provision.

DIRECTION FOUR: SUSTAINABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Funding

There would be an immediate increase in the Ministry of Education bulk grant to ensure that existing EC services remain sustainable during the period in which the more comprehensive changes are put in place.

To deliver the initiatives outlined above, the current ECE funding and regulatory systems would need to be revised. The revision of the funding system is likely to take two to three years and would require significant consultation with the early childhood sector. In the meantime the current funding rate and criteria would be adjusted to better reflect the costs faced by EC services. Responses to the August 2001 consultation document showed significant support for changes to funding levels and models.

We have proposed a number of changes to accountability requirements. Not all these proposed changes require regulatory change. Consideration would be given to introducing them early in the process.

Regulatory review

A review of the total regulatory framework is also a priority and would include:

- stocktake of the regulatory environment for EC services (not just the ECE regulations) to minimise compliance burdens and ensure "fit for purpose" while safeguarding quality;
- consultation with expert groups around particular aspects of the regulations (e.g. ratios);
- regulatory change to implement policy changes, e.g. teacher qualifications, ratios; and
- legislating *Te Whäriki* .

Appendix A

Beyond the financial constraints of Government, the working group that developed the strategic plan had a vision for even better contexts for children, families and whänau, and teachers/educators. They are:

- An entitlement to a reasonable amount of free early childhood education for all children before they start school, implemented in stages. The first stage would be an entitlement to free early childhood education for children aged 3 and 4 of up to 15 hours per week.
- Reductions in ratios for sessional services to 1:10 and for all day services to 1:8; and further reductions in group size.
- 0.2 (not 0.1) release days per week for provisionally registered teachers.

Implementation of these proposals would fully realise the vision of the strategic plan.